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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - President Bush to China
Iraq - Senate Vote Internet Summit - Tunisia Avian Flu -
Health Ministers' G7
PARIS - Thursday, November 17, 2005

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

President Bush to China
Iraq - Senate Vote
Internet Summit - Tunisia
Avian Flu - Health Ministers' G7

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

President Bush's trip to China, the Senate's vote on Iraq and Guantanamo, and the summit in Tunisia with the U.S. retaining its control over the Internet are today's major front-page stories.

Reports in Le Monde and Le Figaro emphasize that the Senate vote marks a disavowal of the President's policy. For Liberation "the debate over when" the U.S. Army will begin its pullout from Iraq "is open." (See Part C)

All reports on the Senate vote include details about the allegations of torture of Sunnis in an Iraqi prison. Separately, Liberation carries an AFP item on CIA prisons: "After Spain, Norway, Sweden and Morocco are now alleged to have been used by the CIA in the transport, detention or interrogation of detainees." France Soir publishes a blistering article on U.S. use of phosphorus in Fallujah in 2004. (See Part C)

Reports on the President's visit to Asia include his stop in China, and his next stop: South Korea. (See Part C) Le Figaro carries an interview with the South Korean Foreign Affairs Minister: "Our alliance with Washington is in the midst of a major change. But it is a strong and sturdy relationship. We may be more conciliatory about North Korea. But we are more directly concerned. This does not mean that the nuclear threat is not crucial for us. When a solution is found on this issue, we will be in a better position to develop our economic cooperation with North Korea."

The conclusion of the WSIS in Tunis is generally seen as successful. For Liberation, "U.S. control is the least of two evils." Le Monde is somewhat less enthusiastic: "International control of the Internet would be a good thing. Unless it is overwhelmingly accepted that Washington alone is capable of regulating the virtual world as well as the real world." (See Part C)

France's policy towards integration remains a major story in connection with the recent violence which erupted in various cities. Le Figaro carries an op-ed by Nicole Bacharan, an expert on the U.S., in which she supports the idea of 'positive discrimination' for France: "Rather than complain about the way other countries portray us and our suburban violence, it would be more useful if we looked at the methods others use to favor integration. Affirmative action in the U.S. merits that we take a closer look."

Catholic La Croix devotes its lead to avian flu and "China's Big Awakening." In his editorial Francois Ernenwein praises President Chirac and World Bank Chairman Paul Wolfowitz for their support to a global strategy to address the threat. (See Part C)

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

Iraq

"President Bush's Iraq Policy Under Surveillance"
Patrick Jarreau in left-of-center Le Monde (11/17): "The Senate has expressed doubts about the President's actions in Iraq and his desire to speed up the transfer of power to the Iraqis. While the House of Representatives may not go the same road as the Senate, these initiatives in matters of foreign policy translate a change of climate for President Bush."
"Iraq, Guantanamo, Torture: The Senate Is Watching"
Corine Lesnes in left-of-center Le Monde (11/17): "The amendment adopted on Iraq is a rebuke for President Bush."

which reflects the unease which has gripped a public opinion losing confidence in the strategy of the Bush administration's exit policy in Iraq."

"Senate Asks Bush to Account for Iraq Policy"

Jean-Luis Turlin in right-of-center Le Figaro (11/17): "Thanks to Republican votes, the Senate has adopted measures re-enforcing their control over the President's policies. To a large extent the measures are a reflection of the growing unpopularity of the war launched by President Bush. They also reflect the Republicans' concern of seeing this unpopularity weighing in on the mid-term elections. The least that can be said is that the Republicans are no longer united behind the President. They are beginning to take their distance."

"U.S. Army Used Phosphorous in Iraq"

Thomas de Rochechouart in right-of-center France Soir (11/17): "The Pentagon finally acknowledged that the U.S. Army did indeed use white phosphorous in Fallujah. This admission was made with revolting cynicism. The chemical, which is often considered as a chemical weapon, one of the weapons of mass destruction that President Bush accused Saddam Hussein of having, was presented by Donald Rumsfeld as a 'conventional weapon' and said to be practically harmless. Meanwhile the RAI News showed another truth. Many bodies found in Fallujah had blackened faces and were decomposing. The use of the chemical is fatal: it eats away one's organs from the inside. The casualties cannot be 'accidental.' They are necessarily victims that were clearly targeted."

President Bush to China

"Bush Challenges China on Democracy."

Philippe Gelie in right-of-center Le Figaro (11/17): "George Bush's vision for a new Middle East is only at the germinal stages but he cannot resist the temptation to start looking elsewhere. In a speech in Kyoto, Bush paid tribute to Japan, America's closest ally in the region, elevating it to the status of a model for what all of Asia should become. President Bush's policy speech was sure to hurt the sensitivity of his hosts. But China's officials did not wait for the speech before taking stock of the dangers they are facing: they are confronted with an American president who is not only predicting their fall but is asking them to speed it up by way of international trade."

World Summit on the Information Society

"The Least of Two Evils"

Patrick Sabatier in left-of-center Liberation (11/17): "The Internet, by nature and by its international avocation, will not be able to remain under the exclusive control of the U.S. through their supervision of ICANN. At some point ICANN will have to cut the umbilical cord that links it to Washington. But it is a good thing, or the least of two evils, that the offensive mounted by authoritarian regimes, who wanted the Net to be placed under the UN under the guise of fighting against 'U.S. dominance,' failed."

"Internet Under the Influence"

Left-of-center Le Monde in its editorial (11/17): "The compromise reached in Tunis on a status quo for the Internet as proposed by the U.S. and its ambassador David Gross will not change the fact that its 'internationalization' will need to be addressed sometime in the future. As will the need to reduce the 'digital fracture' between North and South. The U.S. clearly wants to retain its sole control. But is this situation tenable? Conversely, will the Internet gain anything if its control changes hands? The U.S. rejects the idea of the international community taking over and raises the specter of non-democratic nations gaining a hold of the Web. This argument is not only valid by and of itself, but more so because the UN has allowed a country like Tunisia, which jails its Internet surfers, to hold this summit. Yet, Internet is also a tool that disseminates propaganda. Democracy will make inroads if such a communications tool were to evolve. Thus putting the Internet under a generally accepted international body would make sense. Unless it is overwhelmingly accepted that Washington alone is capable of regulating the virtual world as well as the real world."

Avian Flu - Health Ministers' G7

"One World"

Francois Ernenwein in Catholic La Croix (11/17): "Both President Chirac and World Bank Chairman Paul Wolfowitz emphasized the need for a global strategy to address the threat of avian flu. President Bush, while in Asia, reiterated that the 'world must work together.' In Rome today the health ministers of the G7 will be talking of nothing else. In Geneva, the international conference that ended on November 9 was crucial: the fact that it decided to earmark close to one billion dollars in aid to fight against the epizooty in Asia proves that when threatened with a global epidemic, solidarity can be effective." STAPLETON